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System and Method for Binding Processes in an E-Commerce HUB

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Docket No. AUS920010990US1

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates in general to a system and method for binding processes in an e-commerce HUB. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and method for providing an open platform for ecommerce business transactions and a translation method for document exchange.

2. Description of the Related Art

E-commerce business transactions are conducted by the electronic interchange of business documents. Electronic documents may represent purchase orders, requests for bids, invoices, or an agreed acknowledgement of a receipt. Various standards exist for the definition and exchange of electronic documents. For example, Rosetta Net, cXML, and industry standards for electronic document EDI are Custom electronic exchange definitions also exist for specific businesses within a particular industry.

The complexity of electronic exchange definitions is increasing to enable trading partners to go beyond the For example, trading simple exchange of documents. partners may collaborate on additional subjects, such as supply chain management. A challenge with existing art is that trading partners pre-agree on a business process and may be confining themselves to a limited set of trading partners.

Applications are available that document, agree, and execute processes on a peer-to-peer basis between trading partners, such as Extricity Alliance and WebMethods. A challenge found with small businesses is they typically do not have the bargaining power to dictate trading processes and may have to support many processes in order to increase access to the market place.

What is needed, therefore, is an e-commerce platform that allows multiple document exchange definitions while providing a message collaboration trail.

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It has been discovered that an intermediary e-commerce HUB provides multiple document exchange definition support while managing message collaboration trails. The e-commerce HUB receives a message from an initiator, assigns the messages to a transaction instance, translates the message, and forwards the translated message to target trading partners.

The HUB receives a message and determines if the 10 message is part of an existing transaction processing instance. If the message is part of an existing transaction processing instance, the HUB verifies that the message is appropriate for the existing processing state. For example, an invoice message should not occur prior to a purchase order message.

Once the HUB verifies the message is appropriate for the existing processing state, the HUB increments the retrieves profile information processing state and The profile corresponding to a first target participant. participants accepted includes the targeted The HUB formats the message corresponding to processes. the target participant's business processes and sends the formatted message to the target participant. If there are more target participants, the HUB formats and sends the message corresponding to each target participant's profile.

The HUB facilitates business process matching between members by providing document translation (i.e. converting a cXML purchase order to an EDI purchase order) and

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business process translation (i.e. converting a Rosetta Net Partner Interface Process (PIP) to an EDI process).

The HUB may also be used as a trading partner screening mechanism. A member may specify trading partner qualification criteria or even block messages from a business with which the member has had a previous bad experience.

The HUB may be used as an advertising tool. HUB members may search the member database for potential trading partners that support a specific business process. A potential trading partner may advertise its supported electronic business processes and potentially win business from members searching for potential trading partners.

The foregoing is a summary and thus contains, by necessity, simplifications, generalizations, and omissions of detail; consequently, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the summary is illustrative only and is not intended to be in any way limiting. Other aspects, inventive features, and advantages of the present invention, as defined solely by the claims, will become apparent in the non-limiting detailed description set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention may be better understood, and and advantages made features, its numerous objects, apparent to those skilled in the art by referencing the accompanying drawings. The use of the same reference different drawings indicates similar symbols in identical items.

Figure 1 is a high-level diagram showing an initiator sending a message to a participant through an e-commerce HUB;

Figure 2 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a message from an initiator;

Figure 3 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a new HUB transaction instance;

15 **Figure 4** is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a message that is part of an existing transaction instance;

Figure 5 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a message through a web interface;

20 **Figure 6** is a flowchart showing a member searching for compatible trading partners;

Figure 7 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing profile requests;

Figure 8 is a flowchart showing steps taken in
// configuring a new member profile; and

Figure 9 is a block diagram of an information handling system capable of implementing the present invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following is intended to provide a detailed description of an example of the invention and should not be taken to be limiting of the invention itself. Rather, any number of variations may fall within the scope of the invention which is defined in the claims following the description.

Figure 1 is a high-level diagram showing an initiator sending a message to a responder through an e-commerce HUB. Initiator 100 sends message 105 to HUB 120 through computer network 110, such as the Internet. Computer network forwards message 115 to HUB 120. HUB 120 examines the requesting message determine if the message is information from the HUB or if the message is to be forwarded to target participants.

If message 115 is requesting HUB information, such as the state of existing transaction instantiations, HUB 120 retrieves the information corresponding to the request from HUB store 130. HUB store 130 may be stored in a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive. HUB 120 sends message 135 which includes the requested information to computer network 110. Computer network 110 forwards message 160 to initiator 100 to complete the message request response.

25 forwarded to target to be Ιf message 115 is participants, HUB 120 retrieves information from member profile 125 corresponding to initiator 100 and participant HUB 120 verifies that valid binding transaction place, and formats the message processes are in

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corresponding to participant 145's business processes. HUB 120 sends formatted message 135 to computer network 110. Computer network 110 forwards message 140 to participant 145. Participant 145 analyzes the message, and sends response 150 to computer network 110. Computer network 110 forwards message 115 to HUB 120 and HUB 120 includes the message in the existing transaction instance. HUB 120 formats the message corresponding to initiator 100's business processes, and sends formatted message 135 to computer network 110. Computer network 110 sends message 160 to initiator 100.

This transaction processing exchange continues until the final transaction corresponding to a transaction instance occurs, such as payment of an invoice. If HUB 120 receives a message not associated with a transaction instance, HUB 120 initiates a new transaction instance making the message the first message in the new instance.

In one embodiment, multiple participants may be recipients of messages and HUB 120 formats each message corresponding to each participant's business processes.

Figure 2 is a flowchart showing steps taken processing a message from an initiator. HUB processing commences at 200, whereupon a message is received from initiator 220 at step 210. A determination is made as to program or message is whether the from а from interactive web-based interface (decision 230). embodiment, a interactive web-based interface message may HTTP message with a particular URL destination be an If the message is from an interactive web-based location. interface, decision 230 branches to "Yes" branch 232

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whereupon the message is processes through web interface processing (pre-defined process block 240, see Figure 5 for further details).

On the other hand, if the message is from a program, decision 230 branches to "No" branch 238. For example, the from purchasing program that message may come a automatically orders supplies. A determination is made as to whether the message is part of an existing transaction instance (step 250). In one embodiment, the message header includes an instance number corresponding to an existing transaction instance. For example, the message may be an invoice in response to a purchase order.

If the message is part of an existing HUB transaction instance, decision 250 branches to "Yes" branch 258 whereupon the message is processed corresponding to its instance (pre-defined process block 270, see Figure 4 for further details).

On the other hand, if the message is not part of an existing HUB transaction instance, decision 250 branches to "No" branch 252 whereupon a new HUB transaction instance is initiated and the message is processed (pre-defined process block 260, see Figure 3 for further details).

Processing ends at 280.

Figure 3 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a new HUB transaction instance. New transaction instance processing commences at 300, whereupon the received message is examined to establish the message type, the initiator, and the target participants (step 310).

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The initiator and first target participant profiles are retrieved from member profile 325 (step 320). determination is made as to whether the initiator and first trading partners participant are identified target embodiment, the target (decision 330). Ιn one participant's member profile includes trading partners corresponding to the target participant (i.e. meeting the target participants qualifications).

If the initiator and target participant are identified trading partners, decision 330 branches to "Yes" branch 332 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the trading partners have a known transaction process which links, or translates, the initiator's business process to the target participant's process (decision 335). In one embodiment, the target participant's member profile includes the transaction process which links the initiator's business process and the target participant's business process.

If the initiator and target participant do not have a known transaction process, decision 335 branches to "No" branch 339 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the HUB has a transaction processing implementation that binds the initiator's process to the target participant's process (decision 355). If the trading partners have a known transaction process or if there is a transaction processing implementation in place, decision 335 braches to "Yes" branch 337 or decision 355 branches to "Yes" branch 359, respectively, and the message starts a new HUB instantiation using the current message as the first message (step 340). The message is processed using its associated new instance (pre-defined process block 345, see Figure 4 for further details).

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Returning to decision 330, if the initiator and target participant are not identified trading partners, decision 330 branches to "No" branch 334 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the target profile excludes trading with the message initiator (decision 350). For example, the target participant may have had a bad experience with the initiator and does not want to have further business transactions with the initiator. This information is indicated in the target participants profile.

If the target profile excludes trading with the message initiator, decision 350 branches to "Yes" branch 352 whereupon a rejection message is sent informing the initiator that the initiator is not authorized to conduct business with the target participant (step 370).

On the other hand, if the target profile does not exclude trading with the message initiator, decision 350 branches to "No" branch 354 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the HUB has a transaction processing implementation that binds the initiator's process to the target participant's process (decision 355). embodiment, a list of binding transaction implementation processes may be stored in a look-up table located in a HUB storage area. For example, a lookup table entry include binding a Rosetta Net PIP process to Τf transaction processing there is а process. implementation in place, decision 355 branches to "Yes" branch 359 and the message starts a new HUB instantiation using the transaction processing implementation.

On the other hand, if there is not a transaction 30 processing implementation in place, decision 355 branches

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to "No" branch **357** whereupon a message is sent to the initiator that a new HUB transaction processing implementation must be implemented and that the initiator may use interactive forms in the interim (step **360**).

A determination is made as to whether there are more target participants of the current message (decision 380). If there are more target participants of the current message, decision 380 branches to "Yes" branch 382 which loops back to select the next target participant profile (step 385), and process the next participant. This looping continues until there are no more target participants of the current message, at which point decision 380 branches to "No" branch 384 and processing ends at 390.

Figure 4 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a message that is part of an existing transaction instance. Transaction instance processing commences at 400, whereupon processing waits for a message (step 410). When a message is received, a determination is made as to whether the message is appropriate for the state of transaction processing (decision 420). In one embodiment, a lookup table stores the current state of a transaction instance and also includes allowable subsequent message types. For example, an invoice message may not arrive before a purchase order message is sent.

If the message is not appropriate for the state of transaction processing, decision 420 branches to "No" branch 422 whereupon a message is prepared informing the message initiator of the error (step 425) and processing ends at 435. On the other hand, if the message is appropriate for the state of transaction processing,

decision 420 branches to "Yes" branch 424 whereupon the state of transaction processing is advanced and a message is prepared to inform the trading participants of the advancement (step 430).

The first trading participant is selected from the 5 initiator's member profile at 440, and a determination is participates the participant made as to whether interactively or through programs (decision 450). embodiment, the target participant's profile includes information describing how the target participant 10 participant participates Ιf the participates. interactively, decision 450 branches to "Yes" branch 452 whereupon processing generates a web presentation of the message and sends the message to the participant (step 15 455).

On the other hand, if the participant participates through programs, decision 450 branches to "No" branch 454 whereupon a message is sent to the participant through client-server programming methods (decision 460).

A determination is made as to whether there are more trading participants for the corresponding instance (decision 470). If there are more trading participants, decision 470 branches to "Yes" branch 472 which loops back to select the next participant (step 475) and process the next participant.

This looping continues until there are no more trading participants for the corresponding instance, at which point decision 470 branches to "No" branch 474 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the current message terminates the transaction (decision 480). In one

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embodiment, a message type may be selected that ends a particular transaction process, such as a confirmation of receipt of payment. Once the transaction is terminated, the transaction history may be stored in a history file for future retrieval.

If the current message does not terminate the transaction, decision 480 branches to "No" branch 482 which loops back to process the next message. This looping continues until the transaction is terminated, at which point decision 480 branches to "Yes" branch 488 and processing ends at 490.

Figure 5 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing a message through a web interface. Web interface processing commences at 500, whereupon login information is retrieved from user 505 (step 510). Navigation options are presented to the user at step 520.

If the user chooses to change profiles, the user proceeds to profile changes (pre-defined process block 525, see Figure 7 for further details). If the user chooses to search for potential trading partners, the user proceeds to browsing potential transaction partners (pre-defined process block 535, see Figure 6 for further details).

If the user chooses to participate in a transaction, the user proceeds to actively participate in the transaction process (step 530). Navigation options are presented to the active participant at step 540.

If the user chooses to view the state or messages of an existing transaction instance, the user proceeds to step 545. In one embodiment, the user enters a user name and

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password and a list of instances corresponding to the user are retrieved from a HUB storage area. The list of instances may include active instances and terminated instances organized by date, target partners, status, or instance number. The process state and messages are displayed corresponding to the selected instance (step 550).

If the user chooses to input a message corresponding to an existing transaction, the user proceeds to step **555**. User input is received at step **570**, and forwarded for transaction processing at step **580**.

If the user chooses to initiate a new interactive transaction-processing instance, the user proceeds to step 560 and provides a first message input that becomes the first message in the new instance.

Processing ends at 590.

Figure 6 is a flowchart showing a member searching for compatible trading partners. Browse processing commences at 600, whereupon user 605 locates a prospective trading partner in HUB store 615 (step 610). HUB store 615 may be stored in a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive. HUB supported transaction processes are retrieved corresponding to the prospective trading partner's business processes (step 620). For example, a HUB supported transaction process may be converting a Rosetta Net PIP to an EDI process.

A determination is made as to whether one of the HUB's supported transaction processes match one of user 605's business processes (decision 630). If one of the HUB

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processes match one of user 605's processes, decision 630 branches to "Yes" branch 632 whereupon a client-server transaction is initiated between the initiator and the prospective trading partner (step 640). A HUB member may use the HUB as an advertising tool to attract business. For example, the member may advertise its supported business processes in order to be recognized by initiators searching for prospective trading partners.

On the other hand, if a HUB process is not found that match user 605's processes, decision 630 branches to "No" branch 638 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the user wants to contract for a HUB processing extension that bridges the user's processing with the prospective trading partner's business process (decision 650).

If the user decides to contract for a HUB extension, decision 650 branches to "Yes" branch 652 whereupon the user contacts HUB administration to generate the For example, the user may have a processing extension. may request the HUB business process and custom administration to generate a processing extension that translates the user's custom business process in order to correspond with other HUB members. On the other hand, if the user does not want to contract for a HUB extension, decision 658 branches to "No" branch 658 whereupon the user interacts with the prospective trading partner through web based messages (step 670). Processing ends at 680.

Figure 7 is a flowchart showing steps taken in processing profile requests. Profile processing commences at 700, whereupon a request is received from user 720 (step 710). Processing searches for the user's member profile at

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step 725 and determination is made as to whether the user is a HUB member (decision 730).

If the user is a HUB member, decision 730 branches to "Yes" branch 732 whereupon the user's profile is retrieved from HUB store 750 (step 740). HUB store 750 may be stored in a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive. Changes are made corresponding to the user's request at step 760.

On the other hand, if the user is not a HUB member, decision 730 branches to "No" branch 738 whereupon a determination is made as to whether the user wants to be a new member (decision 770).

If the user chooses to be a new member, decision 770 branches to "Yes" branch 778 whereupon new member processing takes place (pre-defined process block 780, see Figure 8 for further details). On the other hand, if the user does not want to be a new member, decision 770 branches to "No" branch 772 bypassing new member processing. Processing returns at 790.

20 Figure 8 is a flowchart showing steps taken in configuring a new member profile. New member processing commences at 800, whereupon a new member location is initiated in member profile 825 (step 810). Member profile 825 may be stored in a non-volatile storage area, such as a computer hard drive.

Processing requests a business name from new member 815 at step 820. A business name is received and stored in member profile 825 (step 830). Processing requests preferred business process information from new member 815

at step **840**. For example, new member **815** may use EDI to conduct business transactions. The preferred business processes are received and stored in member profile (step **850**).

Processing requests preferred trading partners from new member 815 at step 860. Preferred trading partners are received and stored in member profile 825 (step 870). Processing request partner qualification criteria from new member 815 at step 880. For example, new member 815 may wish to conduct business only with six sigma suppliers, or with suppliers that maintain a certain annual revenue level. Trading partner qualification criteria is received and stored in member profile 825 (step 890). Processing ends at 895.

Figure 9 illustrates information handling system 901 15 which is a simplified example of a computer system capable of performing the server and client operations described Computer system 901 includes processor 900 which is coupled to host bus 905. A level two (L2) cache memory 910 is also coupled to the host bus 905. 20 bridge 915 is coupled to main memory 920, includes cache memory and main memory control functions, and provides bus control to handle transfers among PCI bus 925, processor 900, L2 cache 910, main memory 920, and host bus 905. bus 925 provides an interface for a variety of devices 25 including, for example, LAN card 930. PCI-to-ISA bridge 935 provides bus control to handle transfers between PCI bus 925 and ISA bus 940, universal serial bus functionality 945, IDE device functionality 950, power management functionality 955, and can include other 30

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functional elements not shown, such as a real-time clock DMA control, interrupt support, and management bus support. Peripheral devices input/output (I/O) devices can be attached to various (e.g., parallel interface 962, serial interfaces 960 infrared (IR) interface **966**, keyboard interface 964, interface 968, mouse interface 970, and fixed disk (HDD) 972) coupled to ISA bus 940. Alternatively, many I/O devices can be accommodated by a super I/O controller (not shown) attached to ISA bus 940.

BIOS 980 is coupled to ISA bus 940, and incorporates the necessary processor executable code for a variety of low-level system functions and system boot functions. stored in any computer readable medium, including magnetic storage media, optical storage media, flash memory, random access memory, read only memory, and media conveying signals encoding communications instructions (e.g., signals from a network). In order to attach computer system 901 to another computer system to copy files over a network, LAN card 930 is coupled to PCI bus 925 and to PCI-to-ISA bridge 935. Similarly, to connect computer system 901 to an ISP to connect to the Internet using a telephone line connection, modem 975 is connected to serial port 964 and PCI-to-ISA Bridge 935.

25 While the computer system described in Figure 9 capable of executing the invention described herein, this computer system is simply one example of a computer system. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that many other computer system designs are capable of performing the

30 invention described herein.

One of the preferred implementations of the invention is an application, namely, a set of instructions (program code) in a code module which may, for example, be resident in the random access memory of the computer. required by the computer, the set of instructions may be stored in another computer memory, for example, on a hard disk drive, or in removable storage such as an optical disk (for eventual use in a CD ROM) or floppy disk (for eventual use in a floppy disk drive), or downloaded via the Internet or other computer network. Thus, the present invention may be implemented as a computer program product for use in a various methods computer. In addition, although the described are conveniently implemented in a general purpose computer selectively activated or reconfigured by software, one of ordinary skill in the art would also recognize that such methods may be carried out in hardware, in firmware, or in more specialized apparatus constructed to perform the required method steps.

While particular embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those 20 skilled in the art that, based upon the teachings herein, changes and modifications may be made without departing from this invention and its broader aspects and, therefore, the appended claims are to encompass within their scope all such changes and modifications as are within the true 25 Furthermore, it is to spirit and scope of this invention. be understood that the invention is solely defined by the appended claims. It will be understood by those with skill in the art that if a specific number of an introduced claim element is intended, such intent will be explicitly recited 30 in the claim, and in the absence of such recitation no such

limitation is present. For a non-limiting example, as an aid to understanding, the following appended claims contain usage of the introductory phrases "at least one" and "one or more" to introduce claim elements. However, the use of such phrases should not be construed to imply that the introduction of a claim element by the indefinite articles "a" or "an" limits any particular claim containing such introduced claim element to inventions containing only one such element, even when the same claim includes the introductory phrases "one or more" or "at least one" and indefinite articles such as "a" or "an"; the same holds true for the use in the claims of definite articles.